

IV.
THE “*HOW DO WE GET THERE?*”
PART OF THE PROCESS

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A. STRATEGIES

STRATEGY: A specific course of action that will be undertaken to accomplish goals and objectives. A strategy reflects budgetary and other resources.

Development of strategies provides a clear understanding of how an agency will fulfill its mission through accomplishment of goals and objectives, and how it will deal with strategic issues. Strategies consider internal agency programs as well as external organizations. Strategies determine the amount and type of resources that must be allocated to achieve goals and objectives. More than one strategy may be needed. Different types of strategies will apply to different types of operations. For example, strategies may include:

- expansion of programs and/or services;
- reduction in or elimination of programs and/or services;
- collaboration with other agencies to combine resources to achieve a shared goal (such as natural resources, agricultural, and environmental agencies working together to reduce pollution in local tributaries; and family services agencies working together to strengthen and preserve families); and
- positioning of a program(s) to be competitive in the market when the same type of service(s) is provided by the private sector (such as the Injured Workers' Insurance Fund positioning itself competitively in the workers' compensation market; and the Department of Human Resources positioning itself competitively to provide adoption services).

Strategies also are designed to improve the organization's capacity, resources, and/or influence. Strategies are developed at both agency-wide and program levels.

1. Characteristics of Strategies

- Strategies are processes.
- Strategies, like objectives, are **SMART** (**Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Results-oriented, and Time bound**).
- Strategies are linked in a logical way to your goals and objectives, and may lead to the accomplishment of more than one goal and more than one objective.
- More than one strategy may be needed to accomplish a particular goal or objective.

Agency examples of selected *Managing for Results* elements which have been discussed to this point are shown in **Exhibit 8**.

Exhibit 8

Hypothetical Examples of Missions, Visions, Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

ELEMENTS	HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE OPERATION	HEALTH BENEFITS DIVISION	WATER MANAGEMENT ADMINISTRATION
Mission	To provide a state highway system that provides people and goods with a safe, convenient, efficient, and pleasant roadway system on which to travel	To provide cost-effective health benefits that meet the reasonable needs of state employees for health care	To improve and maintain the quality of the state's water resources to a level that supports a balanced population of aquatic resources; protects public health; and sustains a strong statewide economy
Vision	A state which provides citizens with an excellent highway system	A state in which all state employees are provided with high quality, cost-effective health benefits and customer services	A state in which the ground and surface waters support a high quality of life for all citizens and living resources
Goal	To provide road surfaces that ensure a smooth and comfortable ride for people and goods traveling in the state by automobile	To provide health benefit plans that are affordable to both our members and state agencies	To ensure safe drinking water quality for all citizens of our state and those served by public water supply systems
Objective	By the year 2000, eighty percent (80%) of state highways will be in excellent condition	By 1999, limit the average rate of cost increase to the rate of increase of our state's regional health care cost index, or less	By 1999, ensure a compliance rate of 99% for all contaminants for the population served by public water systems
Strategy	By 1997, complete an evaluation and status report on the condition of maintained highways; develop and implement a repair and maintenance schedule	By 1997, hire an independent claims auditor to verify claims payment accuracy by vendors	By 1998, conduct an additional 6 comprehensive performance evaluations at surface water treatment facilities, increasing from 28 in January of 1997 to 34 in January of 1998
Performance Measures:			
Input			
Output			
Efficiency			
Outcome			

Quality			
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2. HOW TO Build Strategies

Managers, supervisors, and front line employees must determine how to achieve desired results. Utilizing Continuous Quality Improvement problem solving teams to develop strategies and action plans is a good approach.

It is important to consider several alternative strategies for each objective. When formulating strategies, you should consider:

- barriers to as well as opportunities for achieving the goals and objectives;
- the costs, merits, and anticipated consequences of alternative courses of action;
- the external factors that may affect costs and effectiveness;
- your internal capacities (personnel, training, facilities, hardware, software, other equipment, budget) and how you will obtain the needed resources if they are not currently available;
- the time frame for implementing a particular strategy; and
- the processes that are the most effective and efficient ways to accomplish specific goals and objectives.

Strategies may be identified through a number of ways:

- **Evaluate strategies already in place.** Other units or sections in your agency may have implemented similar goals and objectives. They may have procedures in place that you can borrow, and experience and knowledge that you can use. The situation inventory portion of the internal/external assessment should have identified what the organization is doing well, where improvements are needed, and organizational strengths and weaknesses. Program evaluations and internal audits should also be used to review current strategies.

- **Brainstorm how to achieve results.** Brainstorming generates and encourages innovative ideas and identifies opportunities for coordination and cooperation.
- **Research what works.** Researching successful programs in other State agencies and private sector organizations provides useful information. The results of your benchmarking process also will have identified the “best” and how it got that way (see the section on objectives for more information on benchmarking).
- **Look at processes that you identified while forming your objectives.** Most likely you talked a lot about process while forming your objectives. Now is the time to consider those processes as the starting points for strategies that you may want to refine.

Before you reach a decision about the method you will use to achieve your goals and objectives, weigh each alternative. **Some additional considerations include:**

- If this course of action is implemented, is it plausible that the goals and objectives will be reached? How do we know?
- Will this course of action have a positive or negative impact on any other goals and objectives? Is it dependent upon the successful implementation of any other goal or objective?
- Are we organized to implement this course of action? If not, what must be changed to accommodate implementation?
- If changes are necessary, how long will they take? Are there other constraints that will occur as a result?

Once the costs, benefits, possible constraints, time frames and resources have been analyzed, a strategy(ies) can be selected. Selection of the strategy(ies) can be based on the following additional evaluation criteria:

- acceptance by customers and key stakeholders;
- positive relationship to the agency’s vision, mission, and values;
- clear linkage to accomplishment of a goal and objective;
- integration with other strategies;
- technical feasibility;
- staffing and training requirements;

- facility requirements;
- short term versus long term impact;
- legal authority; and
- political considerations.

It is preferable to begin with a small number of strategies and build the organization's capacity to deal with the changes that will be required to implement the full action plan which supports the strategy(ies).

Next, you will identify the necessary steps to successfully implement the strategy(ies) in order to achieve the goals and objectives. These are the action steps that will appear in the action plan. Examples of action plans which support strategies are shown at the end of the section on **Action Plans**.

B. ACTION PLAN

ACTION PLAN: A detailed description of how a strategy will be implemented.

An action plan puts a strategy into action. Action plans are geared toward operations, procedures, and processes, and describe who does what and when. An action plan details what steps must be taken to implement a strategy. Action plans are developed at the program level.

HELP

1. HOW TO Develop and Manage an Action Plan

When developing the action plan, consider the following:

- What are the steps necessary to support the strategy and implement this action plan, and how long will each step take?
- Once the action plan is implemented, will procedural changes be required? If so, what impact will they have on the agency?

Action plans should contain as much detail as each level of management feels is important.

The section or individual who is responsible for implementing each objective will need the most detail. However, upper management may only want to know that the objective is being implemented on schedule and not want to know the status of each step of the action plan that supports the strategy.



NOTE

Although some strategies may be obvious or mandated, selection of others may not be final until the action plans are developed. It may take that level of detail to reveal the best of several alternatives. The action plan process may reveal flaws in the strategies for which the action plans are developed. In those cases, feedback from action plan development should be used to adjust the strategy.

To successfully develop and manage an action plan, follow the five steps below:

I Assign responsibility for successful completion of the action plan.

II Set a time frame for completion of the action plan.

In the overall context of the strategy, decide when the action plan as a whole should be completed. Be sure that the time frame for the action plan as a whole is consistent with individual time frames projected for steps within the action plan.

Note: In practice, it may be necessary to detail the action plan steps and time frames before the time frame for the action plan as a whole is set.

III Detail the action plan in steps.

The individual or team responsible for completion of the action plan should detail the action plan further in steps (that is, define the steps that must be finished in order to fully complete the action plan). Steps should be briefly described, indicate who is responsible for completion of the step, and have expected start and finish dates.

IV Determine the fiscal impact of the action plan and the resources necessary to carry it out.

The individual or team responsible for completion of the action plan should determine

fiscal impact and identify human, physical, information, and financial resources to carry out the plan. The action plan becomes the basis for developing requests for capital and operating budgets, as well as to support human and information technology resource management.

0 **Review and check your strategies and action plans.**

Make sure you are addressing unmet customer needs by reviewing the results of your internal/external assessment. Consider whether you can combine any of your strategies. Ensure that your action plans and overall implementation plans include:

- specific anticipated results and milestones;
- roles and responsibilities of the implementers;
- specific action steps;
- schedules;
- resource requirements and sources;
- a communication process;
- a review and monitoring process; and
- accountability processes and procedures.

After you put your strategies into action through your action plans, they may have to change if:

- new problems arise;
- priorities change, therefore changing goals and objectives; or
- your strategies are not achieving your objectives.

Before you change your strategies, go back and review your goals and objectives. This will help to clarify your direction. Use the same steps in reviewing your strategies as you did in reviewing your objectives in the “*Where do we want to be?*” part of the process.

Now as a final check, test each of your action plans against the **Action Plan Checklist (Checklist 6)** on the following page. If necessary, revise your action plans.

Checklist 6

Checklist for Action Plans

Action Plan: A detailed description of how a strategy will be implemented.

For each program, indicate if the action plan meets the criteria of the Checklist. Complete one column for each action plan under a particular program. If the response to the Test Question is Yes, place a "Y" in the box; if the response is No, place a "N" in the box, and revise your action plan as necessary.

CHECKLIST FOR ACTION PLANS					
Goal Number: Objective Number:	Program N Program Name & #				
Action Plan for Strategy #:					
Test Question	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5
Does the action plan contain a time frame for completion?					
Is the action plan broken down into important steps (e.g. have operations, procedures and processes been included)?					
Has responsibility for successful completion of the action plan been assigned?					
Are additional resources needed to accomplish the action plan? Have arrangements been made for additional resources?					
Does the action plan contain sufficient detail to track milestones?					
Does the action plan relate to/will it help to achieve the objective?					
Does the action plan relate to the goal?					



2. HOW TO Organize an Action Plan

A numbering or lettering system is recommended for ease in identifying each particular goal, objective, strategy, and performance measures.

A typical method for organizing a results-oriented plan is to tier a numbering system from goals down to strategies. For example, goals could be numbered 1, 2, 3. Objectives could be numbered to correspond to each goal: 1.1 or 1-1 would represent the first objective under the first goal, 1.2 or 1-2 would represent the second objective under the first goal. Strategies would be numbered to identify which goal and objective they support. For example, 1.1.1 or 1-1-1 would be the first strategy which supports the first objective, and first goal. Performance measures would be numbered to correspond to goals, objectives, and strategies. For example, 1.1.1.2 would indicate the second measure which supports the first goal, objective and strategy.

The numbering system does not necessarily have to represent the importance of the goal or objective, unless the agency has decided to prioritize elements of the plan.

Small Agency



Helpful Hint

Since much of the information included in the action plan will also be used for the tracking and monitoring document, agencies may want to design one format to accomplish both purposes. An example is shown in **Exhibit 16**.

A sample format for action plans and examples of completed action plans are provided in **Exhibits 9, 10, and 11** on the following pages.

Exhibit 9

SAMPLE FORMAT FOR ACTION PLANS WHICH SUPPORT STRATEGIES

PROGRAM NAME AND # _____

DATE _____

Goal # _____

Objective # _____

Strategy # _____

Action Steps to Support Strategy	Persons Responsible	Time Table	Resources Needed

Exhibit 10

SAMPLE ACTION PLAN

PROGRAM NAME AND #
DATE

AFDC 0000.00
FY 1996 7/1/95

Goal # 1: _____ To provide benefits in correct amounts and in a timely manner.

Objective #1.1: _____ By June 30, 1996, to process 99.7% of AFDC applications within 45 days.

Strategy #1.1.1: _____ Target specific offices with timeliness problems/issues

Action Steps to Support Strategy	Persons Responsible	Time Table	Resources Needed
1. Identify barriers to processing applications: A. Program Barriers B. Client Barriers	Program Administrator, QA Manager, Eligibility Determination (ED) Staff/Policy/Procedures	July 1, 1995, to November 30, 1996	Workgroup, QA staff, ED staff, and Policy staff ; applications data
2. Review QA reports to identify offices	Workgroup leader	December 1, 1996, to January 1, 1997	Data for each local office
3. Develop solutions to timeliness issue, including resources, FTEs and cost-benefit analysis	Workgroup and program Managers for X, Y, & Z offices	January 1, 1997, to March 31, 1997	Personnel, cost, and budget data
4. Institute solutions developed by designated personnel	Program Administrators and Program Managers	March 31, 1997, to June 30, 1997	Detailed Policy and Procedures

Exhibit 11

SAMPLE ACTION PLAN

PROGRAM NAME AND # Highway Maintenance Operation 0000.00
DATE FY 1996 7/1/95

Goal # 1: To provide road surfaces that ensure a smooth and comfortable ride for people and goods traveling in the state by automobile.

Objective #1.1: By the year 2000, 80% of state highways will be in excellent condition.

Strategy #1.1.1: By 1997, complete an evaluation and status report on the condition of maintained highways; develop and implement a repair and maintenance schedule.

Action Steps to Support Strategy	Persons Responsible	Time Table	Resources Needed
1. Update inventory of state maintained highways by region	Program Administrator, Planning & Engineering staff	July 1, 1996, to August 31, 1996	Workgroup, highway maps, Consolidated Plan data
2. Regional Offices assess available personnel for survey crews	Area managers & their senior staff	August 1-31, 1996	Personnel lists, work schedules, regional project schedules
3. Distribute updated inventory to area engineering managers	Program Administrator	September 1, 1996	Clerical support
4. District Offices assign survey crews to assessment tasks	Regional managers & their senior staff	September 1-30, 1996	Inventory of State maintained highways, list of available personnel and equipment
5. Regional survey teams conduct assessment of highway quality	Survey Team personnel	October 1, 1996, to February 28, 1997	Survey teams, State highway maps, road testing equipment, vehicles
6. Regional Office staff collect survey results and forward them to Headquarters	Regional managers, senior staff, survey teams	March 1-15, 1997	Survey Team reports
7. Analyze survey reports to develop a status report and ranking of all state maintained highways	Program Administrator, Planning & Engineering staff	March 15 - April 30, 1997	Survey Team reports

Now that you have completed the “*How do we get there?*” part of the process, you must now determine “*How do we measure our progress?*” This will involve development of management control systems such as **performance measures, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting.**